

Vestige

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - NIGHT

A patch of dirt. A FOOTPRINT.

TITLE CARD APPEARS

A child's foot slaps down into the print, filling it perfectly. It quickly leaves frame.

Harsh moonlight pries its way through the branches of the tall trees. A dirt path extends through the foliage. A VICTORIAN HOUSE idly watches as a YOUNG CHILD runs down the path. He wears a button down shirt and khaki shorts.

Tears stream down his face as he rushes down the path, passing a FIGURE wearing dark wash jeans and a brown leather jacket. A BLACK HOOD conceals his identity.

The figure watches the child until he disappears down the path. He pauses for a moment, turns towards the house, then leaves frame.

He walks up to the house, looking up at a SILHOUETTE through an upstairs window. It lightly presses against the glass. It's still, almost unnerving.

INT. HOUSE ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

The door creaks open. The figure steps inside. The rooms is dark, with hints of moonlight creeping in through an interior doorway.

A beat.

A LIGHT faintly flickers from a small distance away. The figure takes a couple steps forward. He sees a HOUSE LAMP sitting on a small table.

He keeps walking towards the light. It flickers faster.

He reaches the light. The flicker speeds up rapidly.

We see the bulb as it glows at its brightest.

CLICK. The bulb cuts out. The room goes dark.

A beat.

CLICK! The light of the bulb FILLS THE ENTIRE ROOM.

The figure looks around the room. He hears... music? The faint notes of CHRISTMAS JAZZ catch his ear. He follows the sound.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A HAZY, yet NOSTALGIC looks covers the frame. We see a living room, with vibrant Christmas decor, a greenish-blue couch, a BOX TV, and a record player spinning a Christmas album.

AMY (50) decorates a CHRISTMAS TREE. She wears a short-cut black dress. She wears her hair back. She's clearly trying to look younger than she really is.

BRIAN (60) sits on the couch, reading a newspaper. He wears a solid color polo and Khaki pants.

AMY

God, just-

AMY tugs the Christmas lights, unable to plug in the cord inside the tree. She turns to her husband.

AMY (CONT'D)

Brian, I could really use your help over here.

He doesn't look up from his paper.

BRIAN

You're doing great, Hun.

AMY

No, I actually need...

He doesn't even flinch.

AMY (CONT'D)

Hey!

He looks up.

BRIAN

What?

AMY

You know what, forget it.

Brian shrugs as he goes back into his paper. Amy walks over to a WINE CABINET. She grabs a half empty bottle and pours herself some wine into a small glass resting on the counter.

AMY (CONT'D)  
Those comics going to take you the  
rest of the night?

BRIAN  
Not the whole night. Family Ties is  
on at 7.

A beat. Amy walks over to Brian. She rips the paper from his  
hand.

AMY  
How about something other than  
recreation?

Brian looks confused. He leans forward towards Amy.

BRIAN  
Do you have something in mind?

AMY  
Yeah. Jack left a mess in the bath  
tonight.

BRIAN  
Clean it up.

AMY  
I can't- I can't decorate and clean  
at the same time.

BRIAN  
Do it later then.

AMY  
Clean, cook, school- why do you  
expect me to do this all on my own?  
It was your idea to move out here  
to the middle of nowhere!

Silence.

AMY (CONT'D)  
This is not a one woman job!

A beat.

Brian leans forward and snatches the paper back.

BRIAN  
It's not a working man's job  
either.

Amy looks away disheartened. Brian sighs.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Look...

(pause)

I- I need my time to breathe.

AMY

You don't love them.

BRIAN

Now you know that's not true.

AMY

Then put down your goddamn headlines and love them!

He stands up.

BRIAN

You have everything you wanted!  
What more do you want from me?!

AMY

I don't- I don't know! Maybe a  
little more time?!

BRIAN

I don't have time!

AMY

I want a family!

BRIAN

You have a family!

JACK (O.S.)

Dad?

The couple stops their fight. JACK (7), stands in his blue pajamas by the doorway. The figure, standing next to the child, looks down at him. Brian goes to comfort him.

BRIAN

It's okay Jack. It's okay. C'mon,  
Let's go back to bed.

He picks up Jack.

JACK

What's happened?

BRIAN

It's alright. Come here.  
Everything's fine.

Brian leaves with Jack in his hands. The camera spins around Amy, swirling the alcohol in the glass. She stares where the figure now stands.

AMY  
...you did this.

Click. The nostalgic light fades. The moonlight re-enters the windows.

Amy is gone. SHARDS OF GLASS are seen on the ground where she once stood.

A beat.

The figure leaves frame. We hold on the glass.

INT. CHILDREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Flick! The overhead light turns on.

A small bedroom. Dark blue curtains draped over a central window. A desk in the middle with a bed on each side. 90s band posters hang on the right side and an assortment of superhero posters hang on the left.

Brian enters with Jack in his hands. CHRISTIAN (17) stirs awake in his bed.

CHRISTIAN  
(sleepy)  
What's going on?

BRIAN  
It's nothing, don't worry about it.  
Go back to bed.

Brian lays Jack in his bed and tucks him in.

JACK  
What's wrong with Mom?

Brian caresses his son's head.

BRIAN  
Everything's fine. Mom's just  
tired, okay?

Jack nods. Brian turns to Christian.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
(to Christian)  
Hey, next time, make sure he's  
asleep before you are, okay?

CHRISTIAN  
Okay.

Christian gives a light thumbs up.

BRIAN  
Alright, goodnight.

Brian goes to the door. His hand hovers on the light switch.

JACK  
Dad?

He turns to Jack, his hand stays rested on the light.

BRIAN  
Yes?

JACK  
Do you love Mom?

A beat.

Brian walks back to Jack and sits on the edge of the bed. Fiddling around in his pocket, he pulls out a SILVER HEART-SHAPED PENDANT. He stares at it for a brief moment.

BRIAN  
Here.

He hands the pendant to Jack. He cups it in his hands.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
This was a gift from your mom.

Jack flips the pendant open. Inside is a picture of Brian and Amy together, like one from a JC Penny's photo booth. Both are smiling.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
When you get married, you promise  
to love someone forever.

Jack looks at the pendant, then up at his father.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
I want you to give that to someone  
you love when you're older, okay?

Jack nods his head. Brian smirks.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Goodnight.

Brian makes his way to the door. He puts his hand on the light switch.

JACK

Dad?

Brian sighs.

BRIAN

What?

JACK

Do you love Mom?

A beat.

He flicks the light off. The door shuts behind him.

Defeated, Jacks plops his head back onto his pillow. He still holds the pendant.

Christian stirs from this sheets and turns on his LAMP. Jack looks over at Christian.

CHRISTIAN

Next time you can't sleep...

(pause)

Come to me first, okay?

Jack nods. He rolls over in his sheets. Christian flicks off the lamp.

CUT TO:

INT. CHILDREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

The kid's room is now ransacked. Posters fallen off the walls, toys scattered across the floor, and sheets ripped off the beds. The figure stands in the middle of the mess, his shadow pressed onto the wall.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Montage. Amy hastily hangs up Christmas decorations.

She struggles, but Amy manages to plug the Christmas tree lights back in.

She places a nutcracker on a counter.

Amy places an ornament on the tree. She drinks out of the wine bottle.

She places the final angel on a small table and steps back to view her handiwork.

AMY

Boys!

The brothers stumble down the stairs and into the living room with great enthusiasm.

JACK

Woah, I want to open the first gift!

CHRISTIAN

(Playfully, egging on)  
I'll beat you to it!

Jack goes for the presents.

SWOOSH!

Amy scoops up Jack and holds him back.

AMY

No, Jack. We got to have dinner first.

JACK

No! I want the present!

AMY

I said. Dinner!

CHRISTIAN

Put him down.

Reluctantly, she puts Jack back on the ground. A long stare ensues between Amy and Christian.

AMY

Dining room.

Jack walks out passed his brother. Christian gives one last look at his mother before he leaves.

Amy drinks the last drop out of the wine bottle, and as she leaves, tosses the wine bottle onto the couch.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A small but cozy dining room. Christmas decorations of reds, greens, and whites are set upon the table.

Brian looks at a newspaper as Jack picks at his food. Amy shakes her leg underneath the table.

Amy looks over at Jack.

AMY  
(direct)  
Eat your food, Jack.

JACK  
I'm not hungry.

AMY  
I'm not in the mood for one of your stunts. Eat.

Jack doesn't respond.

AMY (CONT'D)  
I said eat!

Jack sniffles. He starts to cry.

CHRISTIAN  
(neutral)  
Do you have to yell at him?

AMY  
Brian.

BRIAN  
(looking at the paper)  
Eat your food, Jack.

Amy grows visibly frustrated. Christian motions to his brother.

CHRISTIAN  
C'mon Jack, the sooner you eat your food, the sooner you get to open up your presents.

Jack gives a half-smile.

AMY  
Stay out of this.

CHRISTIAN  
 (to Jack)  
 You remember what you asked Santa  
 for, right?

Christian takes his overcoat and puts it over his face like  
 a cape.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)  
 I am justice. I am the night...

Jack starts to laugh.

AMY  
 Brian!

CHRISTIAN  
 Dun un un un un un un nu... BATMAN!

Jack breaks out laughing.

Amy slams her fist on the table.

AMY  
 Enough!

Silence.

AMY (CONT'D)  
 It's none of your business.

CHRISTIAN  
 Why shouldn't it be?

AMY  
 Let the parents handle it.

CHRISTIAN  
 He's my brother!

AMY  
 You are not his father!

A beat. Christian stares at his mother.

CHRISTIAN  
 Fine.

He gets up from his chair, taking his plate of food with him.

AMY  
 Brian.

Brian doesn't look up. Christian walks up the stairs behind him.

BRIAN  
Goodnight, Christian.

Amy's had enough. She gets out of her chair and storms to the other side of the table. She snatches the paper from Brian's hands.

THWACK!

She smacks her husband across the head with the paper.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
Hey!

AMY  
I'm trying to instill some discipline here and you are of zero help!

BRIAN  
Seems like you did all there was to do.

AMY  
Why can't you just- be the father?  
Just, be direct. They'll listen to you.

BRIAN  
Well, you yelling at them is not going to change anything!

AMY  
Can't you do one thing?! Just one thing!?

BRIAN  
Not everything is about you, Amy!

AMY  
This is! This is! Why can't you just help me?

BRIAN  
I don't want to be the parent right now.

AMY  
Then why are you still here?

Silence. Brian picks at his food.

BRIAN  
Fine.

He stands up, taking the paper back from Amy's hands.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
I'll get out of your way then.

AMY  
Brian? Brian!

She chases him up the stairs, leaving Jack by himself at the table.

AMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Brian, where are you going? Brian,  
don't do this. Brian!

Jack takes the PENDANT out of his pocket and holds it in his hands.

A beat.

AMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Brian, stop!

INT. HOUSE ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

The putter-patter of footsteps grows loud as Brian stampedes his way down the staircase, carrying a suitcase and a backpack. A distraught Amy follows.

AMY  
Brian, please don't do this!

Brian puts his hand on the front door knob. Amy grabs him on the shoulder, turning him away from the door.

AMY (CONT'D)  
Brian, please don't go- please, I  
can't do this without you! Please  
don't go- don't leave me, please!

BRIAN  
You're the one who wanted children!  
If you know the magic way to run  
this family, then do it yourself!

AMY  
I'm sorry! I'm sorry!

She reaches for his shoulder. Brian shrugs her off.

BRIAN  
Get off me!

He turns the knob and swings the door open.

WHAM!

The door slams shut. Amy falls onto the wood of the door, sliding to the ground.

Jack enters the room.

JACK

Mom?

Amy doesn't respond.

JACK (CONT'D)

Are you okay, Mom?

Amy looks up. She sees the PENDANT dangling from his hands. Her eyes go wide.

AMY

Where'd you get that?

Jack doesn't respond. He starts to quiver. He holds the pendant closer to his chest.

AMY (CONT'D)

You did this.

Jack takes a step back. Amy crawls towards him.

AMY (CONT'D)

You put this in his head!

A beat.

AMY (CONT'D)

This is your fault!

Jack turns around and runs into the dining room. Amy chases after.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack runs around the dining room table. Amy crashes into the wall behind him, staggering her way towards him. They both run out of frame.

INT. CHILDREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

The camera whips to reveal Christian sitting on his bed listening to his Walkman.

THUD!

He rips off his headphones.

JACK

Mom?!

He jumps up from the bed and runs downstairs.

CHRISTIAN

Mom?!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack runs into the living room and runs to the window next to the wine cabinet. He tries to open the window, but he can't grab hold. He turns to face Amy, tears down his face.

Amy runs into the room and slows to an alarming pace. She slowly walks over to the couch.

AMY

Go ahead, Jack- dinner's over.

She grabs the empty WINE BOTTLE from the couch.

AMY (CONT'D)

You can open your presents now.

Christian runs down the stairs.

CHRISTIAN

Mom, whatever this is, you need to stop right now.

Amy lashes back towards Christian.

AMY

You can't tell me what to do! I am your mother! You listen to me!

She turns to Jack.

AMY (CONT'D)

Are you happy now?

Jack says nothing. He shakes.

AMY (CONT'D)

Did you get what you wanted?!

CHRISTIAN

Put the bottle down right now!

JACK  
Dad help!

AMY  
Dad's not here!

CHRISTIAN  
Mom, stop!

She raises the bottle into the air. Jack cowers. Christian runs around Amy and steps in between her and Jack.

CRASH!

The bottle violently crashes upon the side of Christian's head. Glass shatters everywhere. Splotches of wine hit the carpet. Christian falls to the floor.

AMY  
Oh god.

Amy snaps out of her drunken rage.

Blood seeps from the side of Christian's head. Shards of glass lay on his clothing. Amy falls to the floor, hugging his body.

AMY (CONT'D)  
AAAHHHHH!!!

AMY (CONT'D)  
Christian, Wake up! Christian. No  
no no no, please! Christian!

Jack is frozen, eyes wide. Only the slightest sounds of Amy's breathing and sniffing are heard.

Amy turns to Jack.

AMY (CONT'D)  
Jack- Jack...

Jack takes small steps away from Amy and towards the living room doorway. He doesn't take his eyes off Amy.

A beat. Jack runs for the door.

AMY (CONT'D)  
No, no please stay!

INT. HOUSE ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Jack opens the front door and bolts outside.

EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Jack runs out of house and down the dirt path, recalling the opening scene. His shoe steps down into the footprint.

INT. HOUSE ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Amy wraps her arms around Christian and pulls his body across the floor, carrying him to the front door.

RED AND BLUE FLASHING LIGHTS (police lights) stream through the windows and the open front door.

Amy lets out a loud cry as her head buries into Christian's shoulder.

FADE TO:

Amy and Christian fade away. The room morphs, the moonlight returns. The figure stands where they once were.

A beat.

The house lamp flickers.

The figure turns to see an OLDER WOMAN open the front door. She slams the door shut and runs upstairs.

The figure follows.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

We see a long hallway. The woman stumbles through, unable to keep herself up straight. She enters a door on her left. We hear the door shut behind her.

The figure steps into frame. He walks down the hallway and up to the door. He places his hand on the doorknob.

A beat.

He turns the knob. He steps inside.

INT. MOTHER'S SOLITARY - NIGHT

The door creaks open. The moonlight shines through a central window. The walls are sparse, only a couple small paintings are scattered about. A bed and a nightstand furnish the room.

A SILHOUETTE sits in a wooden chair. The figure inches closer.

He reaches the chair and steps slowly in front... AMY occupies the seat. Wrinkled lines are spread about her face, with frazzled hair and heavy bags under her eyes. A BEIGE BLANKET is wrapped around her.

She's frozen; not even the slightest flinch. Her eyes are wide as if something is about to attack her.

The figure slips off the hood. A man, mid 20s, is seen. He has short blonde hair and a grown out beard. He looks as if he hasn't slept in a few days.

He kneels down in front of her. He looks up at Amy.

JACK

Hey mom.

Jack just stares for a moment.

JACK (CONT'D)

I- I never answered your question.

(pause)

A couple of weeks after that night... you remember that night, right? The police found me, handed me to dad, and, well... I was in five different foster homes since then. And, you know, they always tried... They tried to get me to open up, but I didn't want to talk about it. And, you know, every family said the same thing, that "he doesn't talk, maybe some other family can fix him". And after a decade of being someone else's problem, I couldn't- I couldn't take it anymore.

(pause)

So I ran. I lived out of cars abandoned on the highways. I snuck into motels at four AM through the windows. And every-

(pause)

I always tried to come back here. I'd try to find my way back home, standing outside, just wondering, thinking that maybe you were all still here and it was just a fucked up nightmare.

He swipes away the tears from his eyes. He grips onto the blanket.

JACK (CONT'D)

So, no. No, I'm not- I'm not happy. I didn't get what I wanted. Who says that? I wanted my dad.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

I wanted my brother... my *mom*.  
Because you. You got to grow up with  
your family, and I didn't get to  
grow up with mine!

He shakes Amy from her shoulders. He grips the blanket  
harder.

JACK (CONT'D)

You took them away from me. What  
part of our family was so terrible?  
What part of our family was so  
terrible?! Was it me? What part of  
*me* was so unlovable?

He grips the blanket as tight as he can.

JACK (CONT'D)

ANSWER ME!

He rips the blanket off.

A beat.

Sitting in Amy's lap... is a BATMAN ACTION FIGURE. His eyes  
fixate on the toy.

Jack drops the blanket. He slowly reaches to pick up the toy.  
He gives way to a broken smile.

A beat. He kneels back onto the floor.

JACK (CONT'D)

You know... you know you're going  
to be a grandmother?

Amy continues to stare out the window.

JACK (CONT'D)

Me and this girl - Ashley.

(pause)

I- I couldn't. I think I was just  
so scared. I mean, I don't know the  
first thing about being a dad. A  
parent.

(pause)

I mean, How could I?

(pause)

I think I was so scared because...  
I didn't want to love her like you  
loved me. I didn't want to do that  
to her.

He looks up at his mom. She still hasn't moved.

JACK (CONT'D)

Oh, god. I fucked it up, didn't I.  
I fucked it up. But it's who we  
are, isn't it? That's what we do.

Silence.

JACK (CONT'D)

(pleading)

Can you just answer me?

(pause)

Mom. Please just... just answer me.

Jack looks down, tears stream down his face. A long pause...

... A light behind Amy starts to flicker.

Jack looks over his mom's shoulder to see BRIAN sitting on the edge of the BED. The bedroom lamp flickers, then becomes a constant source of light.

Brian holds the PENDANT in his hands. Behind him, AMY is tucked in the covers. She rolls over and opens her eyes, placing her hand on her husband's back.

AMY

We'll be a whole family. You'll  
see. We'll love them both.

BRIAN

I'll try, Amy.

Amy rolls back over. A beat.

Brian places the pendant on the nightstand. Propped up on the lamp is an ULTRASOUND.

He looks towards the window, but to Jack's perspective, it's as if his dad is looking right at him.

A beat.

...the light fades out as Brian fades with it. The moonlight returns.

Jack just stares. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out the PENDANT. He holds it in his hand, thinking over the photo that still resides in the heart.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Sunlight shines upon the house. Jack is seen walking away from the house.

He stops. He looks up at the window for a moment, then turns to leave, but just before he does, the sound of leaves rustling catches his ear.

He turns his head to see... himself. A YOUNG VERSION OF JACK stands besides a tree, looking at the house.

A beat.

Young Jack makes his way back onto the dirt path and walks away from the house.

Jack looks back at the house. A beat.

He turns, running to catch up with his younger self.

INT. MOTHER'S SOLITARY - EARLY MORNING

The mother watches on as Jack departs. Sunlight beams over her face.

The camera moves down to show her hand outstretched on the arm rest of her chair. In her palm... the pendant.

A beat.

Her finger's twitch, cupping onto the pendant.

EXT. GRAVEL PATH - EARLY MORNING

The two versions of Jack walk down a gravel path surrounded by trees. About halfway down the path, Young Jack fades away. Jack walks the final stretch of the path alone.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END